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**Contact: Wendy Fox
617-626-1453**

ON EARTH DAY, GOVERNOR PATRICK LAUNCHES THE 2008 RECREATION SEASON AT STATE PARKS AND BEACHES

Governor highlights additional beach staffing, extended pool hours, and the second annual Park Serve Day and Great Park Pursuit events; celebrates plan for Neponset River Esplanade

Governor Deval Patrick today celebrated Earth Day by kicking off the 2008 recreation season in parks and at beaches across the Commonwealth, highlighting several dozen new ocean beach jobs, spring maintenance schedules for parks across the Commonwealth, \$1 million in new beach equipment, and capital improvements at a number of facilities.

At this morning's press event at the Hatch Shell in Boston, the governor was joined by Energy and Environmental Affairs Secretary Ian Bowles, Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., several legislators, members of park friends groups, and a number of private citizens and children. He announced the second annual Park Serve Day on May 17, and the upcoming Great Park Pursuit series of outdoor family adventures, which begins May 10.

"Under the leadership of Secretary Bowles and Commissioner Sullivan, DCR is making great strides," said Governor Patrick. "Massachusetts residents and visitors alike will find our state parks and beaches better than ever this year, and I encourage everyone to enjoy them, and get involved in preserving them."

The governor also announced plans to create a new \$5.18 million park along the Neponset River between Mattapan Square and Hyde Park. The park, to be called the Neponset River Esplanade, will extend the greenway corridor and pathway system along Truman Highway, and includes the rehabilitation of the Martini Shell as a performance and activity center.

Plans for the roughly 3-mile park include extending the bike and pedestrian pathway from Mattapan Square in Dorchester to the Martini Shell, adding a canoe and kayak launch near the Shell, and renovating the former Truman Highway Field Office as a Neponset River Esplanade headquarters building. The estimated completion date for the entire project is late spring 2010.

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS · EXECUTIVE OFFICE OF ENERGY & ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

Department of Conservation and Recreation
251 Causeway Street, Suite 600
Boston MA 02114-2119
617-626-1250 617-626-1351 Fax
www.mass.gov/dcr



Deval L. Patrick
Governor

Timothy P. Murray
Lt. Governor

Ian A. Bowles, Secretary, Executive
Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs

Richard K. Sullivan, Jr., Commissioner
Department of Conservation & Recreation

“The Neponset River Esplanade is a perfect addition to DCR’s roster of urban parks, a beautiful spot for walking and cycling, putting in a kayak or canoe, or just sitting and reading,” said Secretary Bowles.

The new park, which is the product of a public, multi-year master planning process for the Neponset River area, is a precursor to the Commonwealth Urban Park initiative envisioned in the governor’s 5-year capital spending plan and \$1.4 billion Energy and Environment Bond Bill, which is pending in the Legislature.

This year’s second annual Park Serve Day promises to be even larger and more extensive than last year’s, when more than 1,300 volunteers cleaned beaches, cleared trails, painted picnic tables, and planted flowers and trees at 53 state parks across the Commonwealth.

“Park Serve Day volunteers last year collected more than 46 tons of litter that otherwise would have marred the beauty of our parks in spring,” said Commissioner Sullivan. “The contribution of these volunteers toward giving our parks a facelift for the season is invaluable. We thank them very much, and we look forward to having them back for another successful Park Serve Day next month.”

DCR’s second annual Great Park Pursuit, held on six consecutive Saturdays, will begin May 10 in Borderland State Park in Sharon. Each Saturday through June 14, the Great Park Pursuit will offer games and activities for all ages in a different park each week. Last year, more than 400 families – or “teams” – registered to participate, and this year promises to be even bigger.

“The Great Park Pursuit was a huge success last year,” said Sullivan. “Adults and children alike learned how to canoe, make a campfire, pitch a tent. They watched search and rescue dogs demonstrate their talents, followed clues through the woods, and saw birds of prey up close. This year’s Great Park Pursuit will build on the success of last year’s and promises to be even better.”

For more information on Park Serve Day and the Great Park Pursuit, visit www.mass.gov/dcr.

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The Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR), an agency of the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs, oversees 450,000 acres of parks and forests, beaches, bike trails, watersheds, and dams, in addition to 278 bridges and miles of roadways. Led by Commissioner Richard K. Sullivan Jr., the agency’s mission is to protect,

promote, and enhance our common wealth of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. To learn more about DCR, our facilities, and our programs, please visit www.mass.gov/dcr. Contact us at mass.parks@state.ma.us.